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COMINT REPORT

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181838Z JANUARY 1966
DIST: O/VNCOMINT REFLECTIONS OF THE SHOOTDOWN OF AN RA5C AIRCRAFT, 20 DECEMBER 1965INTRODUCTION

INTERCEPT OF MULTI-CHANNEL RADIO RELAY FACILITIES SERVING THE DRV SAM SYSTEM DURING THE PERIOD 0042Z-0617Z, 20 DECEMBER 1965, CONTAINED CONVERSATIONS REFLECTING THE SHOOTDOWN OF AN RA5C AIRCRAFT ON THAT DAY. DURING THE 2300Z HOUR ON THE 19TH, FOUR AIRCRAFT WERE DETECTED IN THE GULF OF TONKIN, THREE OF WHICH APPARENTLY ENTERED THE DRV LANDMASS IN THE GENERAL HAIPHONG AREA AND FLEW TO AN UNDETERMINED POINT NORTHEAST OF UONG BI. THE AIRCRAFT THEN FLEW BACK OUT INTO THE GULF OF TONKIN. AT THIS POINT ONE AIRCRAFT, REPORTEDLY FLYING ON A WESTERLY HEADING, RE-ENTERED THE DRV LANDMASS AND OVERFLEW UONG BI. THE AIRCRAFT, DESCRIBED IN COMMUNICATIONS AS EITHER AN A3 OR A5 TYPE, WAS SHOT DOWN APPARENTLY ON THE IMMEDIATE WESTERN SIDE OF UONG BI BY AAA FIRE. OF THE TWO CREW MEMBER, ONE WAS REPORTED DEAD, WHILE THE OTHER WAS INDICATED TO BE WOUNDED AND APPARENTLY IN CRITICAL CONDITION. ALTHOUGH REFERENCES WERE MADE TO A RESCUE AIRCRAFT, IT CANNOT BE DETERMINED WHETHER OR NOT THIS WAS AN ASSUMPTION OR A REFLECTION OF AN AWARENESS THAT RESCUE UNITS HAD BEEN ALERTED.

DETAILS

BETWEEN 0042Z-0125Z DRV PERSONNEL AT THE HAIPHONG AREA SAM REGIMENTAL HEADQUARTERS AND AIR/AIR DEFENSE HEADQUARTERS, HANOI DISCUSSED THE SHOOTDOWN OF AN AIRCRAFT. THE SPEAKER AT THE REGIMENTAL HEADQUARTERS REPORTED THAT DURING THE 2300Z HOUR (19 DECEMBER) FOUR AIRCRAFT WERE DETECTED IN THE GULF OF TONKIN. THE AIRCRAFT ENTERED THE DRV LANDMASS IN THE GENERAL HAIPHONG AREA AND FLEW NORTHEAST OF UONG BI TO AN UNDETERMINED POINT, THEN TURNED TO THE SOUTHWEST. THE AIRCRAFT WERE NOT TAKEN UNDER FIRE ON THIS FIRST PASS. ONE AIRCRAFT THEN RE-ENTERED THE DRV LANDMASS ON A WESTERLY HEADING AND FLEW ALONG A ROAD, OVERFLYING UONG BI WHERE IT WAS SHOT DOWN BY AAA FIRE. AT APPROXIMATELY 0120Z, THE SPEAKER AT THE AIR/AIR DEFENSE HEADQUARTERS INFORMED THE REGIMENTAL HEADQUARTERS AS FOLLOWS: "...AND AT THE SAME TIME THEY ARE SENDING A PLANE TO CONTINUE THE RESCUE." "...AND, RECENTLY THEY...PRESENTLY THEY ARE SENDING A PLANE TO RESCUE THE PILOT". A REFERENCE WAS ALSO MADE TO A PLAN TO DEFEND AGAINST THE ARRIVAL OF THE RESCUE AIRCRAFT; HOWEVER, THE

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SPECIFIC DETAILS OF THE PLAN WERE NOT DISCUSSED AND NO FURTHER REFERENCES TO A RESCUE AIRCRAFT WERE NOTED.

BETWEEN 0359Z-0429Z, SPEAKERS AT THE SAME TWO LOCATIONS AGAIN DISCUSSED THE DOWNED AIRCRAFT, WHEREIN THE SPEAKER AT THE REGIMENTAL HEADQUARTERS IDENTIFIED THE AIRCRAFT AS AN A3 OR A5 TYPE. A FINAL REFERENCE TO THE SHOOTDOWN OF THE AIRCRAFT OCCURRED BETWEEN 0613Z-0617Z. THE GENERAL FLIGHT DIRECTION OF THE AIRCRAFT WAS REPORTED. THE CONDITION OF THE CREW WAS REPORTED, AS ONE DEAD AND THE OTHER WOUNDED AND IN CRITICAL CONDITION. IT WAS FURTHER REPORTED THAT AS THE AIRCRAFT WAS PASSING OVER UONG BI, AAA UNITS IN THAT AREA WERE SHOOTING AT IT. THE TARGET THEN REPORTEDLY PASSED OVER ANOTHER UNIT VERY SLOWLY, WHERE AAA FIRE POWER WAS CONCENTRATED ON IT AND IT WAS THEN SHOT DOWN.

COMMENTS

COLLATERAL SOURCES HAVE REPORTED THE LOSS OF AN RA5C THAT HAD BEEN SCHEDULED TO CONDUCT A PHOTO/EDA MISSION OVER THE UONG BI THERMAL POWER PLANT, WITH TIME OVER TARGET AT 200000Z. THE RA5C WAS ACCOMPANIED BY TWO F4 ESCORT AIRCRAFT AND A SPARE RA5C, ALL OF WHICH LOST CONTACT WITH THE DOWNED AIRCRAFT AT 192359Z. THE CONVERSATION COMPLETED DURING THE PERIOD 0042Z-0125Z, REFERENCING THE FLIGHT OF FOUR AIRCRAFT, WAS PROBABLY A REFLECTION OF THE TWO F4 AND TWO RA5C AIRCRAFT. THE SHOOTDOWN APPARENTLY OCCURRED DURING THE PERIOD 192359Z AND 200042Z, DECEMBER 1965. THERE WERE NO REFERENCES TO MISSILE LAUNCHES, THUS INDICATING THAT THE AIRCRAFT WAS PROBABLY OPERATING AT AN ALTITUDE BELOW 5,000 FEET. THE CONVERSATION DURING THE PERIOD 0613Z-0617Z REVEALED THAT THE AIRCRAFT APPARENTLY FLEW SLOWLY OVER ONE UNIT AFTER PASSING UONG BI POSSIBLY INDICATING THAT IT WAS INITIALLY HIT BY AAA FIRE OVER UONG BI AND DOWNED BY A UNIT LOCATED WEST OF UONG BI. THROUGHOUT THE CONVERSATIONS THERE WERE NO REFERENCES TO THE CREW MEMBERS BAILING OUT, THIS INDICATING THAT THEY WERE FOUND IN THE AIRCRAFT WRECKAGE.

THE COLLATERAL SOURCE ALSO REPORTED THAT RESCUE SERVICES WERE ALERTED, BUT NO SEARCH WAS POSSIBLE IN THE OBJECTIVE AREA DUE TO LOW CEILINGS AND HEAVY AAA/AUTOMATIC WEAPONS ENVIRONMENT. THE REPORT FROM THE AIR/AIR DEFENSE HEADQUARTERS AT 0120Z REFERENCING A RESCUE AIRCRAFT COULD INDICATE; (A) DRV PERSONNEL ASSUMED THAT A RESCUE ATTEMPT WOULD BE MADE OR (B) THEY WERE AWARE OF THE FACT THAT RESCUE UNITS HAD BEEN ALERTED.

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